

Task Force on Disability Issues
Email Correspondence

PUBLIC SAFETY / TRAINING / INFORMATION:

- Does the Tempe Police Department, 911 operators, Firefighters, paramedics, or other emergency response workers here have any access to knowing at which addresses in the city there are people living with hidden disabilities that affect behavior like autism, Asperger Syndrome, mental retardation, schizophrenia, etc.? If not, how hard would it be to set up a way to red flag people's addresses, at the homeowner's request, so that 911 or emergency personnel know that a person with a hidden disability is living there? This could potentially help both parties in an emergency situation where, for instance, an officer feels threatened by the subject's unusual behavior, and fires a gun at them not knowing they have an established behavioral or mental diagnosis that may explain their behavior. This sort of system would also be more discreet than say, sticking a bright red sticker on your front window, which can be a source of embarrassment for the family or disabled individual.

One other thing that might benefit safety and emergency personnel is some general training in identifying someone with a hidden disability. There is a new training video coming out at the end of this year, made specifically for law enforcement and emergency personnel, designed to educate during their morning roll call or briefing sessions. It features people with varying degrees and forms of autism and Asperger's Syndrome, from age three to age 44, with field shooting from south Florida, Detroit, and Southeast Michigan. Considering the ballooning population of individuals with autism and Asperger Syndrome, I think education like this could be of real help for anyone who deals with the general public.

DISABILITY AWARENESS / EDUCATION / INFORMATION:

- Does Tempe currently have a Disabilities Awareness Day in place? Maybe the Mayor could declare some particular day (during the school year) as such, which might prompt schools and other public places to dedicate some time and effort to disability awareness. Maybe this could be a catalyst for schools and other places to host annual disability fairs and awareness campaigns? It would be a great day to stress positive programs that can involve everyone in Tempe, like Best Buddies programs, etc.

- My most optimal idea is to establish a "**Disabilities Resource Room**" at Tempe library, complete with any disability related literature, guides/brochures, resource lists, optimally a computer with bookmarked links to all the cool disability related subjects, and ultimately, a **staffed ADA Coordinator** whose responsibilities would include (but not limited to) answering the **Disabilities Hotline**, providing service as a city Architectural plan reviewer for ADA compliance, assisting with public information, serving as the Tempe liaison to the East Valley as it interfaces with other cities on disability and related issues, and serving as a human resource services conduit to local agencies that can assist our Tempe public. Ideally, the ADA Coordinator would operate primarily out of the Disabilities Resource Room so the impetus would be there to keep the information current and vital and also be in closest proximity to the public.
- Revitalize the Disability Hotline.....new public media introduction with periodic and regular reprints (water bills, and ???)
- Generate a listing of Agencies/Services and print for distribution. Also place this listing on our website.
- Revitalize/merge our website into city's master website with hot-link to disability subsection. Add all the resources as hot-links.

IN-HOME PERSONAL CARE:

- An issue I would like to see as part of our study is in-home personal care. Many people with disabilities need this type of assistance and so do elderly people.

I reviewed the list of topics and saw things like jobs, transit, etc. If a person can't get out of bed in the morning or get dressed, he/she can't hold a job or use transit. So, this is a critical issue.

Perhaps the group can come up with some ideas for people to get affordable in-home care. Maybe even lobby for a tax credit.

One idea: ASU is an excellent resource for this kind of assistance. Within the last year, I was in contact with the volunteer organizations coordinator at ASU. I thought it would be possible to post some sort of ad seeking volunteers to do personal care or even just clean house. Unfortunately, ASU will not do this for individuals: only for non-profit organizations. For example, United Way can post an ad that they need office help.

CITY INFRASTRUCTURE / CAPITAL MAINTENANCE:

- Under category city Infrastructure/Capital Maintenance..... New goal, new energy, **new mandate to eliminate unsafe ramps and unsafe street/crosswalk transitions**...everywhere they can be identified or are identified by concerned public. Build a program that solicits the public to identify unsafe ramps and street/crosswalk transitions, and supplement it with a hound-dog inspector to pro-actively find them. These accidents are not mere accidents to a disabled person, rather potentially life-threatening incidents, since many in wheel chairs have porous bones that cannot heal within normal durations. It often takes 6 months or more for porous broken bones to heal, and the bed-ridden conditions often cause other complications. Additional medications to treat associated urinary tract infections, antibiotics added to a list of regular meds can affect kidneys or liver during an extended recovery. We have had known incidents with at least 3 commissioners in as many years. I can personally attest to this and would be glad to speak with anyone about this serious problem in our community.

ADA COMPLIANCE / ENFORCEMENT:

- Create some generic guidelines for (others) to guide in the drafting of enforceable ordinance (by the City of Tempe) that prevents barriers at the front entrances of public and governmental businesses. This is a highest level ADA infraction with no easy City recourse.
- Hire ADA Coordinator for Architectural plan review with city (see Information Exchange recommendation.)

HOUSING:

- Under category Housing - Create some generic guidelines for (others) to guide in the drafting of universal design for residential new construction which incorporates a ramp or zero grade entrance to new home construction

EMPLOYMENT / TRAINING:

- Generate a listing of all the Agencies/Services out there for training and print for distribution. Also place this listing on our website. Gather information from the Valley, not limited to Tempe.